

May 3, 2005
Sarah Scranton, Executive Director

House Committee on Health Policy

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan opposes passage of HB 4446, which would amend the 24-hour waiting period requirement to mandate an ultrasound on all patients, provide the patient with the opportunity to view the active ultrasound image, and to provide the patient with a physical picture of the ultrasound image, prior to performing an abortion.

It is clear that this bill is just one more attempt to erect another barrier between a woman and her right to choose abortion. In addition to the cumbersome information and materials a woman is required to digest before obtaining an abortion, current law also mandates that a health care provider show a woman seeking an abortion the image of a fetus at the same gestational age as her own. Women already are required to view this image, therefore these bills are redundant and clearly politically driven.

Leading medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Medical Women's Association and the American Public Health Association oppose procedure-specific informed consent requirements that may interfere with the doctor-patient relationship or compromise a physician's medical judgment as to what information or treatment is in the best interest of the patient. Medical professionals understand the serious health risks created by state-mandated obstacles to legal abortions. A woman should not be subjected to an invasive medical procedure only to prove a political point. Clearly it is not medically necessary that a woman observe the ultrasound image, particularly for medical abortions done in the first seven weeks of gestation when the pregnancy is still in the embryonic stage of development. Nor is it medically necessary that she receive a printed image of the fetus. Health care decisions are best left to medical providers, not politicians.

Instead of legislating medical procedures, the Michigan Legislature should focus their efforts on preventing unintended pregnancies in the first place. Instead of providing a vague reference to pregnancy prevention information in the current 24-hour law, the Legislature should tighten this language to also require that women who obtain an abortion receive information on family planning that includes all FDA approved methods of contraception, including natural family planning, and a list of the family planning providers in Michigan that receive federal and/or state funding to provide family planning services. If the Legislature truly wants to provide women information and reduce the number of abortions in Michigan, they will embrace these policies.

It is clearly obvious that we all want to decrease the number of unintended pregnancies and need for abortion. I challenge you to work with Planned Parenthood and other organizations that are truly interested in reducing abortion through common sense policies. We should work together to increase access to health care and family planning, expand insurance coverage of contraceptives and teach our young people to protect themselves and make responsible decisions with comprehensive abstinence plus education.

On behalf of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, I urge you to oppose this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

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